

Statement of Mark A. Limbaugh
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U.S. Department of the Interior
before
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Committee on Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

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My name is Mark A. Limbaugh, I am Director External & Intergovernmental Affairs for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. I am pleased to provide the Administration's views on H.R.2301, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to construct a bridge adjacent to the Folsom Dam in California.

H.R. 2301 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to design and construct a bridge on Federal land west and adjacent to Folsom Dam in California which would, upon completion, be transferred to the City of Folsom. H.R. 2301 authorizes that \$85,000,000 be appropriated for this purpose.

While the Department of the Interior strongly supports closure of the current roadway across the top of Folsom Dam and construction of a new bridge to ease traffic problems, this is not a Federal responsibility and therefore the Administration cannot support H.R. 2301.

Background

When construction of Folsom Dam was completed in the mid-1950's, the narrow two lane road built on the top of the dam was intended to serve as an access road for maintenance and for incidental recreational access to the lake. In the ensuing years, as the population of Placer and El Dorado counties has grown (Placer County has been listed as the fastest growing county in the nation), and since the area adjacent to the dam is within the city limits of Folsom, California - which is one of the fastest growing cities in the state - the road over Folsom Dam has become a major transportation artery between these two counties. Over the last 20 years, traffic on this road has grown exponentially to the point that up to 18,000 cars cross the dam each day.

However, two events in 1995 and more recent events on September 11, 2001 have highlighted the need for a bridge to bypass Folsom Dam.

Spillway Failure. In 1995, a spillway gate at Folsom Dam failed which necessitated closing the road for an extended period for both immediate safety reasons and then to accommodate repairs to the spillway. As a result, traffic congestion adversely impacted the city of Folsom and severely restricted emergency traffic (police, fire and ambulance) from reaching one side from the other.

Oklahoma City Bombing: After the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma was bombed, the Government closely examined the vulnerability of all its structures. Reclamation completed security assessments at Folsom Dam in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 2001 and clearly documented the risks associated with open public access across this dam. Further, Folsom Dam will undergo an in-depth security review in the upcoming months.

9/11/01: After the events of September, 11, 2001, Reclamation closed the road across Folsom Dam which again resulted in serious traffic congestion in the community. Subsequently, the road was reopened during daylight hours to cars and pickups, but is closed to large vehicles at all hours. Further, between the hours of 8:00 pm and 6:00 am, the road is closed altogether and patrolled by armed guards. We continue to have security concerns about this road and will keep these restrictions in place until a full security assessment is complete.

Reclamation's Recent Activities

Over the last several years, Reclamation, who manages Folsom Dam, and the City of Folsom, have been working together to look for a solution.

Recently, Reclamation completed an appraisal level report, dated March 1, 2000 (and updated in November, 2001) which estimated that a replacement road (two lanes) and bridge would cost approximately \$49.6 million. A four lane bridge and road was estimated to cost \$66.5 million and would include the relocation of Reclamation buildings within the road alignments. In addition to Reclamation's work, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), which originally built Folsom Dam, included this appraisal level information in its American River Watershed Long Term Study on flood control options for Sacramento, which includes the option of raising the height of Folsom Dam - requiring a temporary (or permanent) bridge during construction.

Concerns With H.R. 2301

Funding Sources and Priority: While the Administration recognizes and appreciates the safety and security concerns associated with the current situation at Folsom Dam and the importance of this road as a major transportation artery, this is a transportation issue. Reclamation operates and maintains Folsom Dam and is primarily involved in only water management and operational issues at Folsom.

H.R. 2301 is not consistent with current budget priorities. Further, the addition of this extremely large obligation would severely strain Reclamation's budgetary capacity, and limit our ability to help meet other project and water management obligations and needs in California and throughout the west.

Overall Cost and Adjustments for Inflation: H.R. 2301 proposes to authorize \$85,000,000 in appropriations for the design and construction of this bridge. This far exceeds Reclamation's appraisal-level estimates of \$49.6 and \$66.5 million for a two and a four lane road and bridge respectively. Further, H.R. 2301 has no provisions for adjusting the ceiling due to inflation, which is standard practice for a Reclamation construction project. To more accurately budget for this project and provide greater accountability, we recommend that the amount authorized in HR 2301 reflect current estimates and that it authorize adjustments based on existing engineering and construction cost indexes applicable to this type of construction.

Cost Share: An additional concern with H.R. 2301 is the lack of any cost sharing; any Federal involvement in construction of this bridge should have state and local cost sharing arrangements consistent with Reclamation policy. It is my understanding that the City of Folsom and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) have expressed a willingness to cost share such a project. The legislation should require an appropriate, up-front, non-Federal cost share for the entire project, including the cost of replacing the buildings that will have to be relocated.

Conclusion: Mr. Chairman, let me reiterate that the Administration shares the concern of the sponsors of H.R. 2301 about the safety in this community. However, we believe that this bridge, while important is a non-Federal responsibility more appropriate for the state of California, which, if it deems appropriate, may use its own Federal highway funds for the construction.

That concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions.